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SUBJECT: SECRETARY CLINTON'S JUNE 8, 2009 MEETING WITH MIDDLE
EASTERN AND NORTH AFRICAN DEMOCRACY ACTIVISTS

Classified by NEA Acting DAS Richard Schmierer for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

¶1. (U) June 8, 2009; 2:00 - 2:20 pm; Washington, D.C.

¶2. (U) Participants:

U.S.

The Secretary
NEA Acting DAS Madelyn Spirnak
DRL Acting DAS Kay Mayfield
NEA/PI Acting Director Kenneth Longmyer
NEA/PI Charles Kiamie (notetaker)

Middle East and North Africa

Narjis Al Lawati (Oman)
Hidaya Labiioui (Morocco)
Khedidja Belabdi (Algeria)
Mirahan Farag Orabi (Egypt)
Rudy Mounir Sassine (Lebanon)
Mona Jaber (West Bank/Gaza)
Abdelrahman el-Assouli (West Bank/Gaza)
Mohammad Al-Maqbali (Oman)
Intisar Al-Adhi (Yemen)
Dalal M. Darwish (Oman)
Fawzia Rabea (Bahrain)
Yehia S Zawaideh (UAE /Jordan)
Amani Al-Houbaishi (Yemen)
Brahim Elansari (Morocco / Western Sahara)
Tala Abu Taha (Jordan)
Amine Kochlef (Tunisia)
Abdelatif Belghersa (Algeria)
Ezzeddine Saidi (Tunisia)
Hussam Al-Bassam (Kuwait)
Nisreen Mazzawi (Israel)

¶3. (SBU) Summary: Secretary Clinton June 8 met twenty young democracy activists from across the Middle East and North Africa. The Leaders for Democracy Fellows enjoyed a 5-minute photo-op with the Secretary in front of a camera spray, where she stated firmly that the U.S. "will be a partner in working with those who are working on the front lines in their own countries." They then spent 10 minutes with the Secretary behind closed doors, discussing USG-support for democracy programming, Gaza, Western Sahara, and Lebanon. End Summary.

¶4. (U) Twenty visiting Middle Eastern and North African democracy activists met Secretary Clinton as part of the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI)-funded Leaders for Democracy Fellowship program (LDF). LDF is implemented by Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs to support a more open political process and stronger political and civic culture in the Middle East and North Africa. The program encourages active citizen participation and civic virtues through coursework at Syracuse and internships with Washington, D.C.-based democracy organizations. Since 2007, more than 60 participants have received academic and professional training.

THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH...

¶5. (U) During her first day back at the Department

following President Obama's historic speech in Cairo to the Muslim World, the Secretary welcomed the LDF Fellows and made the following statement before a camera spray. Begin text:

SECRETARY CLINTON: It is a very great pleasure and a deep honor to welcome all of the people you see before you from the Middle East and North Africa, each of whom is making a commitment to work on behalf of good governance, rule of law, democracy, human rights, women's rights, issues that are very important to all people everywhere. I'm especially excited because this program is part of a partnership with Syracuse University in Syracuse, New York, so I have a special delight in having them come here to the State Department.

As President Obama said last week in Cairo, we have a number of very important issues that we wish to work with people across the world and particularly with Muslims across the world. And among those are democracy and human rights that are really at the core of self-expression and personal freedom and potential. So it is important to not only welcome these men and women here today, but to pledge our support to underscore that the United States will be a partner in working with those who are working on the front lines in their own countries.

And what I would like to do now is to ask you to come with me so we can have a few minutes to talk. Thank you all. End text.

...AND THE ACTIVISTS IT INSPIRED

16. (C) In their closed-door meeting, Secretary Clinton thanked the Fellows for their commitment to advancing social and political reform in their countries and reaffirmed that she and President Obama believe all countries have the opportunity to fulfill their potential economically and in terms of job creation. She also stressed the need for improved health care, education, and continued hard work on behalf of the Fellows' compatriots. Asked about the Department's commitment to programs like LDF, the Secretary expressed interest in seeing such activities continue to benefit young activists. On Gaza, she recalled the "hopeful time in the 1990s," highlighted present USG assistance strategies, and reflected on the importance of non-violent civil disobedience. On Western Sahara, the Secretary indicated that the Department was "working hard" and hoped to see resolution through active mediation and support from the international community. Finally, on Lebanon, she commented that March 14's recent victory was "significant" and said she was hopeful that it would allow for a "time out" from conflict that would spur cooperation, security, and stability.

COMMENT

17. (C) This was the third cohort of Leaders for Democracy Fellows to meet a sitting Secretary of State. The Secretary's meeting with this group of young professionals demonstrated USG support for reformers in the region and reinforced the Department's interest in encouraging political change led by the people of the region. NEA and DRL look forward to remaining in contact with these Fellows and other LDF alumni. MEPI, in particular, is eager to follow up with current and past Fellows at a networking conference in the region later this year.

CLINTON